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Pocahontas County
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Fiddler

Edden Hammons of Lobelia is the fiddling king of the now almost extinct Pocahontas County white pine forests. Although only 68 years old, his pleasant, seamy face and wide smile are a part of his fiddle that has entertained the mountain folk Of every ridge and hollow in the region west of the Greenbrier River in that sectoin of Pocahontas that is the birth place of Bumble Bee Run, Hills Creek, the head of Cherry, Cranberry and Williams rivers, all sources of famous Elk and Gauley rivers.

Ed Hammons came by his love for mountain music and the mastery of the fiddle from his father, the latter a soldier of the Civil War, who handed down down to Ed the original version of the many tunes created during the war. At the old- time musicians' contest in Roncevert last spring, Ed Hammons played "Washingtons March", taught him by his father, a favorite of a hundred years ago, but now practically lost to the repretoire of the present day fiddler.

The Hammons combination of four, composed of Ed Hammons and the fiddle, James Hammons, banjo picker and Emma Hammons and Thomas Triplett with guitars, is one of the best groups in the whole Greenbrier mountain region.

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It is believed that one of the first, if not the very first, organ in the county was one made by Hermanus Stulting of Hillsboro. The Stultings were musical and desired to have an organ. Not being able to obtain one because of poor transportation, Hermanus went to work and made one.

I have found no organs or harpsichord mentioned in any of the old wills or bills of sale. I dont believe there were many of them until toward the end of the century. Probably not many until the coming of the railroad.

However, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George A. C. Auldridge on Stony Creek is a small organ bought years ago. Mr and Mrs. Auldridge both passed away this spring, but the organ was not sold.

Luther Smiths of Brushy Flats also has one of these small organs that belonged to his father, the late Jake Smith of Edray. Jake Smith and George P. Moore both of Edray use to hold singing schools and they would take their organs in buggys and moved them from one community to the other. They taught the old shaped notes, and there are many of the older people of the county who learned what they know about music from these two old music teachers.

Many of the older people tell me that singing was a favorite pastime in many of the communities, especially by the young people. In some communities they sang mostly hymns while in others they sang songs as well. Some of the old songs as told to me by many people are;

Oh, Susanna, Barbera Allen (now Barbara Allen)
Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt, Old Dan Tucker,

Lord Lovel, Three Leaves of Shamrock, The Dying Cowboy, The Jam on Gary's Rock, I'm Despised for Being Poor, No Home for the Orphan, In the Shadow of the Pines, Maple on the Hill, Dina, And Lee Ervin of Clover Lick says that the old lumbermen sang "The West Virginia Snakes" a lot. He gave me the words to it and insisted that I send them in, but I don't think that necessary, for it sounds crazy to me. He seemed t to think it something special. He says it was written by an Irishman by the name of Patty Burns.

The following is a list of old fiddle tunes given to me by Edden Hammons.

The Forked Deer, Tug Boat, The Lost Girl, Sourwood Mountain, Cluck Old Hen, Turkey in the Straw, Washington's Maech, Greasy Coat, Shaking the Acorns Down, Old Drake, Fishers Horn Pipe, I'll be All Smiles Tonight, Shang High, Old Joe Clark, Birdie, Browns Dream, Not Cheese Under the Hill, Sandy River, Cabin Creek, Shelvin Rock, Sheep and Hogs Going to the Pasture, Arkansaw Traveler, Frosty Morning, Christmas Morning, Two Little Girls in Blue, and Around the Old Camp Ground. These are only a few of the old songs but enough to illustrate the kind of song they sang.

Mrs. Nella Yeager of Hillsboro says that Hermanus Stulting brought with him from Holland, a melodeon, which is a small reed organ. I do not know if this is the same organ that Mr. Bruffey thought he made after he came to Pocahontas or not. In all probability, Mrs. Yeager is right and he brought if with him from Holland. She says that he did not keep it in the parlor, but

kept it in his own bedroom, and that the neighbors could hear him playing on it almost every day.

William T. Price also brought with them a small organ when they came from Va. back to Pocahontas in 1885. See report sent in on July 20, "Churches After the Civil War"